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SUBJECT: HERewith SUPPORT CABLE FOR EAST ASIA BRIEF OCPAS EAB 92-004
FOR 06 JANUARY 1992

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BRIEF

2. NORTH KOREA: IMPLICATION OF NUCLEAR ACCORD

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BRIEF

2. NORTH KOREA: IMPLICATION OF NUCLEAR ACCORD [REDACTED]

THE HISTORIC DECLARATION LAST WEEK ON ESTABLISHING A NUCLEAR-FREE PENINSULA SUSTAINS RECENT MOMENTUM TOWARD IMPROVED NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS BUT DOES NOT ENSURE TERMINATION OF P'YONGYANG'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. [REDACTED]

IN ACCEPTING THE DECLARATION, NORTH KOREA HAS AGREED TO A BAN ON REPROCESSING, AND IT ALSO HAS PROCLAIMED READINESS TO SIGN THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS ACCORD AND TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL INSPECTIONS. P'YONGYANG KNOWS THAT LIVING UP TO THESE AGREEMENTS WOULD HELP END ITS DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION AND WOULD PAVE THE WAY FOR BADLY NEEDED ECONOMIC AID FROM JAPAN AND INCREASED TRADE WITH SEOUL. THE END OF SPECIAL TRADING ARRANGEMENTS WITH ONETIME COMMUNIST ALLIES AND A SERIES OF BAD HARVESTS HAVE AGGRAVATED THE PROBLEMS IN NORTH KOREA'S INHERENTLY INEFFICIENT COMMAND ECONOMY AND LEFT IT INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE TO GROWING INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO END ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. [REDACTED]

NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM CAN STILL SURVIVE

NEVERTHELESS, [REDACTED] INFORMATION [REDACTED] SUGGESTED P'YONGYANG INTENDED TO KEEP ITS WEAPONS PROGRAM GOING AND WAS MAKING PLANS TO CONCEAL IT. THE NORTH MAY SEE DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON AS A DETERRENT AGAINST ATTACK, GIVEN THAT SEOUL IS MODERNIZING ITS CONVENTIONAL FORCES MUCH FASTER THAN P'YONGYANG. IN ADDITION, IF P'YONGYANG HAS BEGUN TO VIEW EXPORT OF NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS OR TECHNOLOGY AS A POTENTIAL HARD CURRENCY EARNER, ITS ECONOMIC TROUBLES COULD KEEP IT FROM CURTAILING ITS NUCLEAR EFFORTS. THE NORTH KOREANS, MOREOVER, ARE SKILLFUL TACTICIANS, AND THEIR MOVE ON THE NUCLEAR ACCORD MAY BE DESIGNED TO REDUCE INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE AND TO IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WITHOUT ACTUALLY DISMANTLING THE PROGRAM. SO FAR, P'YONGYANG HAS TAKEN NO STEPS BEYOND INITIALING THE NUCLEAR ACCORD AND THE NONAGGRESSION PACT. [REDACTED]

LIKELY INSPECTION RESULTS

EVEN IF NORTH KOREA FOLLOWS THROUGH WITH IAEA SAFEGUARDS,

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INSPECTIONS COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THE EXTENT OF ITS NUCLEAR-RELATED ACTIVITY WOULD BE KNOWN, PARTICULARLY IF THE WEAPONS PROGRAM GOES UNDERGROUND. REGULAR PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF ALL FACILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE NORTH'S NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE COULD MONITOR THE REPROCESSING PLANT AND THE AVAILABILITY OF SPENT FUEL AT THE REACTORS AT YONGBYON. THIS WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY CONSTRAIN P'YONGYANG'S ABILITY TO PRODUCE FISSILE MATERIAL FOR WEAPONS AT THESE FACILITIES, ALMOST CERTAINLY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF WEAPONS THAT COULD BE PRODUCED. MOREOVER, THE IAEA'S PLAN FOR SPECIAL INSPECTIONS [] WOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR VISITS TO UNDECLARED FACILITIES. NEVERTHELESS, NEITHER INTRUSIVE INSPECTIONS AT YONGBYON NOR OTHER MONITORING IS LIKELY TO ASSURE THAT P'YONGYANG DOES NOT HAVE--OR COULD NOT OBTAIN--FISSILE MATERIAL FROM AN UNDETECTED SMALLER-SCALE REPROCESSING OR ENRICHMENT EFFORT.

ANOTHER VIEW INDICATES THAT THE TOTALITY OF P'YONGYANG'S STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS SUGGESTS THAT, RATHER THAN STALLING, THE NORTH HAS BEEN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A MAJOR POLICY REORIENTATION--INCLUDING ACCEPTING IAEA SAFEGUARDS. [] EVIDENCE ON WHETHER THE NORTH IS RELOCATING THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM, DISMANTLING IT, OR MOTHBALLING IT FOR POSSIBLE REVIVAL--FROM A HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL BASE--SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. SAFEGUARDS, EFFECTIVELY APPLIED, SHOULD DETECT WHETHER THE NORTH ALREADY HAS DIVERTED ANY SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY OF PLUTONIUM FROM YONGBYON TO A WEAPONS PROGRAM AND SHOULD SEVERELY LIMIT THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE DIVERSION. []

BOX

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS OF RECENT INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

--THE NUCLEAR RESEARCH FACILITY AT YONGBYON IS FOCUSING ITS EFFORTS ON PRODUCING PLUTONIUM AND REPROCESSING IT FOR USE IN A NUCLEAR DEVICE OR WEAPON.

--THE CURRENT RANGE OF VIEWS ABOUT WHEN PLUTONIUM FROM THE REPROCESSING PLANT AT YONGBYON COULD BE FABRICATED INTO A WEAPON IS FROM LATE 1992 TO LATE 1993.

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[REDACTED]

--IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A SMALLER PILOT-SCALE REPROCESSING FACILITY MAY BE OPERATING UNDETECTED AND MAY HAVE PRODUCED ENOUGH PLUTONIUM FOR THE NORTH KOREANS TO HAVE ALREADY FABRICATED AT LEAST ONE NUCLEAR DEVICE.

- [REDACTED] MANY KEY ASPECTS OF NORTH KOREA'S PROGRAM, INCLUDING OVERALL PROGRAM GOALS AND ANY SPECIFICS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS DESIGN. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]